

## **VI. Additional First-Year Responsibilities**

### **A. Organizing and Staffing the State Education Office**

Consolidation within the State Education Office of the four mandated state education responsibilities included in this Short Term Plan, as well as other key state level responsibilities that may be transferred to the SEO after further study, is expected to lead to increased efficiency in the performance of state education functions in the District of Columbia. Organizing and staffing the State Education Office requires the performance of critical tasks that must be completed during this first year of planning and implementation. Work already is underway to recruit a Director for the Office; acquire qualified staff; locate, furnish and equip suitable office space; shape the mission and culture of the Office; develop solid relationships with the agencies and offices with which the SEO must work; and create policies and procedures that support the fair, able and efficient conduct of state level education functions.

Substantial progress already has been made toward staffing the office. The position of Director has been announced, applications have been received, and interviews are underway. A core staff of nine persons has been authorized and included in the FY 2001 budget for the Office. The Interim Director and three staff members are in place and, with the help of consultants, are conducting the initial planning and implementation activities. Position descriptions have been prepared and vacancies announced for additional needed staff. In addition, existing staff may elect to accompany specific functions as they are transferred to the State Education Office or replacement staff may need to be hired.

The ultimate shaping of the organization will, in large measure, be the responsibility of the Director. However, certain requisite policies and procedures are already being developed as part of the transfer of specific responsibilities to the State Education Office. Planning to date has relied on inclusive strategies that sought viewpoints and advice from many sources and have provided extensive opportunities for agencies and offices now responsible for the state education functions to participate in planning the transfer of responsibility to the SEO. Development of the organizational structure and staffing plans for the new SEO are being carried out in consultation with members of the Mayor's senior staff, including the Director of the Office of Policy and Evaluation and the Mayor's Chief of Staff.

The SEO is experiencing serious difficulty locating appropriate office space sufficient to accommodate existing staff (9 core staff and 7 Special Nutrition and Commodities (SNAC) staff), as well as space to house expected growth in the number of staff members as additional functions are assumed. SNAC staff are currently located in a warehouse in Northeast Washington, DC, and core staff are assigned to shared space within other offices on two separate floors of the District Building at 441 Fourth Street, NW.

## **B. Conducting a Study of Additional Responsibilities**

Simultaneous to the transfer and assumption by the State Education Office of the four mandated responsibilities, the SEO also will be engaged in conducting a study to be submitted to the Mayor and the Council recommending additional functions to be assumed by the SEO, along with a proposed transition plan meeting the requirements of Section 6 of the Act.

The ten additional responsibilities for which consideration and study are required include:

1. Acquiring and administering federal grants;
2. Issuing rules that govern acceptable credit to be granted for studies at independent, private, public and public charter schools;
3. Issuing rules regarding enforcement of school attendance requirements for all schools, including independent, private, public and public charter schools;
4. Conducting the census of DC resident minors 3 years of age or older;
5. Establishing the criteria, administering the examination, and granting the credential for the high school General Equivalency Diploma;
6. Issuing work permits for minors;
7. Establishing standardized requirements for annual reporting of statistical information from public and public charter schools;
8. Conducting fact-finding, research, and investigative activities on behalf of the Mayor, the Council, and other public officials;
9. Establishing teacher certification requirements for all eligible District schools including public, public charter, private, and District of Columbia public institutions for post secondary education; and
10. Establishing licensing procedures and standards for instructional staff for all eligible District schools including public, public charter, private, and District of Columbia public institutions for post secondary education.

Section 6 also requires that the study, recommendations, and transition plans on the additional responsibilities be completed and submitted by July 1, 2001, and that they be developed in consultation with the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Schools, the Public Charter School Board, and other agencies with current responsibility. The successful and timely completion of this ten-part study will require that the State Education Office be fully staffed and have access to needed resources.